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ABSTRACT

Mexico and the United States have reached agreements at the national, state, and local levels designed to improve the literacy and schooling of Mexican immigrants in the United States. National agreements include: (1) the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, which links U.S. communities of Mexican origin to Mexico through programs administered by Mexican consulates, supplies Mexican textbooks to U.S. preschool and elementary schools, supports teacher exchanges, and produces a catalog of Mexican university courses relevant to U.S. bilingual teachers; (2) a memorandum of understanding between U.S. and Mexican Secretaries of Education, which promotes teacher exchanges, relevant educational research and innovation, help for migrant students, and intercultural understanding; and (3) the U.S.-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange, which covers a Fulbright teacher exchange program and nonacademic cultural exchanges. State and school district projects include the Binational Program, which facilitates the transfer of migrant students between U.S. and Mexican schools; efforts by the Los Angeles Unified School District to improve the education of Mexican-origin students; and Educacion Sin Fronteras, which adapts Mexican educational concepts to Mexican American adult education. Private agencies that have agreements with Mexico include One Stop Immigration, where immigrants may study English, Spanish, and courses from Mexican school curricula, and may earn a Mexican education certificate; and PROFMEX, which promotes communication between U.S. and Mexican researchers and faculty. Brief descriptions and contact information are provided for 13 selected programs. Contains 13 references. (SV)

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CHAPTER 6

Mexico's Role in U.S. Education: a Well-Kept Secret

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Even as the debate on the North American Free Trade Agreement continues, Mexico and the United States have reached a number of agreements designed to improve the literacy and the schooling of Mexican immigrants in the United States. Mr. Miller provides the details.

The North American Free Trade Agreement has sparked a national political discussion. Politicians, special interest groups, labor unions, and think tanks on both sides of the U.S./Mexican border have publicly debated and are still debating the merits of this agreement. Even as the debate continues, Mexico and the United States have reached a number of agreements concerning education. These agreements are designed to improve the literacy and the schooling of Mexican immigrants in the United States, and they involve national, state, and local governments and even private agencies.

On the U.S. side of the border, agreements have been made with individual school districts, Mexican American organizations, programs for

migrant education, state departments of education, universities, and the U.S. Department of Education. At the outset the agreements usually involve relatively small numbers of individuals, so they do not receive widespread media attention, even in national publications dedicated to education. However, when we examine these programs together, we see that the Mexican government has a substantial presence in educational programs in many parts of the United States.

Since there is no office or clearinghouse that lists all the Mexican programs in the United States, the first step in creating awareness of these programs is simply to describe the ones currently in operation. A word of caution is in order, however. The range of programs offered by the Mexican government is continuing to expand, so this report is not exhaustive in its coverage. I will focus here on educational agreements and programs between Mexico and the United States at the national, state, and local levels that have been in existence since at least 1993. In addition, I will discuss agreements with private agencies.

National Projects

The educational agreements between Mexico and the United States came about as a result of a long and complicated process. The Echeverría Administration in Mexico (1970-76) made attempts to meet with Mexican American leaders to strengthen ties with Mexico, but differences among the organizations in the United States prevented any institutional relationship from developing. President José López Portillo (1976-82) did meet with Mexican American organizations, and this meeting started the work in the United States (Riding, 1989).[1]

Things got off to a slow start. In 1980, the Association of Mexican American Educators held a conference in Mexico City. The plan was for Mexican teachers to share their experiences with teachers from the United States. The few Mexican teachers who attended the conference, however, were outnumbered by officials from the Ministry of Education.

[1]In the past, Mexico has been reluctant to share information about its education system. In June 1978, after the Mexican Ministry of Education failed to respond to my written requests for permission to conduct a study of the teaching of reading and writing in Mexican public schools, I went in person to request permission. I received assurances that the ministry staff would help me with the study, which was to begin at the start of the new school year in September. I also toured the textbook commission facility. When I returned in September, officials from the Consejo Técnico de la Educación (Technical Advisement on Education Office) interrogated me about the purpose of my study. For three days, I answered questions. At the end of October, I received permission to do the study. Official orders came, and I presented information about my study at each school. Officials were still reluctant to share "official" information.

But soon, the process began to gather momentum. Under the leadership of Graciela Orozco and, later, of Roberto López, both of whom worked for the Ministry of Education, the number of programs with the United States increased. Mexican teachers went to Los Angeles and Louisiana, training programs were held for bilingual teachers from the Los Angeles area, bilingual programs in San Jose (California) used Mexican textbooks, and Mexican officials became visiting scholars in the United States. The Office of International Relations in the Ministry of Education was in charge of these programs (Miller, 1991).

Program for Mexican Communities Abroad. In February 1990, Mexican President Carlos Salinas created the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad. The program promotes and runs joint projects linking U.S. communities of Mexican origin to Mexico. Mexican consulates throughout the United States administer the program and are establishing nonprofit Mexican cultural institutes. At this writing, such institutes exist in 13 U.S. cities. The objectives of these programs are to promote business, tourism, culture, exhibits and artistic events, academic exchanges, scholarships, training for bilingual teachers, adult education programs, migrant education, medical insurance for Mexican workers in the United States, sports, and housing.

Each month, the list of projects related to education grows. Currently, the program supplies Mexican textbooks for use in preschools and elementary schools. In addition, literacy and adult education materials are being sent to U.S. cities and states, including Dallas and Brownsville, Texas; Chicago; Philadelphia; the state of Michigan; and Fresno, San Francisco, Sacramento, and Los Angeles, California. In Madera County, California, textbooks in Mixtec are helping Mixtec farmworkers to become literate (Orozco, 1992). In 1990, the Mexican Ministry of Education sent 26 Mexican teachers to work for two years in bilingual programs in Chicago. As of September 1993, 21 teachers were still there, and there are plans to increase this number (Education Section, 1993a).

Mexican educators were also present at the annual conferences of the National Association for Bilingual Education. At the 1991 conference, Mexican educators spoke on theories of bilingual education, and at the 1992 conference, they spoke on a new program of modernization and on aspects of teaching Spanish (Education Section, 1991). The same themes were repeated at the conferences of the California Association for Bilingual Education. During the 1993 conference 40 specialists from 25 Mexican educational institutions organized displays and presented workshops on education in Mexico. Mexican educators also participated in the 1992 and 1993 conferences held by the Texas Association for Bilingual Education (Education Section, 1992; 1993b).

The Program for Mexican Communities Abroad has developed a catalog containing descriptions of courses in 11 Mexican universities in Baja California, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Morelos, Puebla, Querétaro, Sinaloa, and Mexico City. In addition, a program sponsored by the Ministry of Education is listed. In these programs, U.S. bilingual teachers can learn about the Mexican methodology for teaching subjects at the primary level (see "Contact Information" at the end of this chapter to write for catalog).

The Mexican foreign service, La Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, is the umbrella organization that coordinates the services of the various Mexican programs in the United States. However, the programs have no central organization in the United States, and the lack of such organization leads to some duplication of effort. Indeed, most people are not aware of the many activities in which the Mexican education establishment is involved in the United States.

Memorandum of Understanding. On August 17, 1990, U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos and Mexican Secretary of Public Education Manuel Bartlett-Díaz signed a "Memorandum of Understanding," establishing closer U.S.-Mexican ties on education issues and programs. The agreement was to remain in effect until the end of 1991, with an automatic provision for successive two-year extensions.

The original agreement included a stipulation for holding a border conference in October 1991 to discuss the teaching of English in Mexico and of Spanish in the United States, as well as teacher exchanges, migrant education, educational administration, educational research and innovation, and the improvement of intercultural understanding. The conference was held, and it focused on technological education, teacher education, and professional development in the field of education. More than 500 people attended, with each border state sending a delegation.

The activities set in motion by an annex to the agreement for 1992-93 included: (1) exchanges of professors and researchers, (2) an examination of ways to decrease dropout rates, (3) open education programs for Mexicans living in the United States, (4) summer courses in Mexico, (5) help for migrant students, (6) joint efforts in environmental education, (7) linking U.S. and Mexican universities, (8) improving technical education in both countries, and (9) sending Mexican teachers to study in U.S. educational institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

On June 21, 1993, the Mexican and U.S. secretaries of education met again and signed another annex to the agreement. In October 1993 they met once more, though progress on a national level was limited because 1994 was the final year of the Mexican president's term, and he could not run for office again. Moreover, there had been a major change in leadership at the Ministry of Education.

U.S.-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange. Before 1990, Fulbright grants were administered by a foreign service officer at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. But no formal mechanism existed for supporting and expanding educational and cultural exchanges between Mexico and the United States, though the United States had such agreements with 40 other nations.

In November 1990, Presidents Bush and Salinas signed an agreement to create the U.S.-Mexico Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange. The entire Fulbright budget devoted to Mexico—a total of just $2 million—became the first year's budget for the new organization. Mexico agreed to contribute $1 million as well. A 10-member board of directors was named jointly by the Mexican foreign secretary and the U.S. ambassador; six of the 10 came from the private sector. Carlos Ornelas became the first executive director of the commission.

More than 150 grants were awarded during the first year of the new agreement. In addition to the Fulbright funds, the commission has received pledges that total $1 million from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Mexican National Council for Culture and the Arts, and the Bancomer Cultural Foundation for nonacademic cultural exchanges in such diverse fields as dance, translation, and library management. Research proposals in cultural scholarship will be funded, as will support for conferences on a broad array of cultural themes. Currently, there is a Fulbright exchange program for secondary and community college teachers. Under this program a U.S. educator works in Mexico for 6 weeks, and a Mexican teacher comes to the United States for 6 weeks. A proposal to expand this program to a full semester is now under consideration at this writing.

State and District Projects

According to the Mexican foreign service, 40 percent of Mexicans living in the United States reside in California. This situation, coupled with the fact that Los Angeles is the second-largest Spanish-speaking city in the world, provides the rationale for the involvement of the state of California and a number of its school districts in projects with Mexico.

Binational Project. In 1982, the Binational Project between Michoacán and California began. The project simplifies the movement of Mexican migrants from the Mexican state of Michoacán to California. At the start of this project, many discussions seemed to be taking place in a vacuum, because research on the educational and social plight of international migrant children was scarce. In 1984, Deborah Mounts of the California State Department of Education received funding for a project that tracked students who spent part of the year in French Camp, California, and the rest

of the year in Villa Mendoza and Acuitzeramo, Michaocán, Mexico. Her study was based on observations, teacher questionnaires, and family portraits. Mount's findings in terms of education were enlightening (Mounts, 1986). The migrants followed traditional patterns that did not change from year to year. They spent an equivalent number of days in each country (184 in Mexico and 181 in the United States), with an equivalent number of potential school days (142 days in the United States and 140 days in Mexico). The school days in the United States were divided between summer school (46 days) and regular school (96 days). Each time the students moved from Mexico to the United States or from the United States to Mexico, they had to take placement tests, integrate themselves into an ongoing program, become accustomed to new texts, and learn to function with new teachers and classmates. Students tended to be placed in classes and programs below their ability levels.

In 1986, the Binational Program introduced the "binational transfer document" to help correct this problem. Since then the project has expanded to include eight Mexican states and Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. To register at participating schools, a student must have a birth certificate and a transfer document validated with the binational seal. Students with proper documentation are accepted at any time of the year in the Mexican schools and are placed at the same grade level as in the U.S. school they last attended. No examinations are required. If a student does not have proper documentation, then an initial assessment is administered in local offices rather than at the state level. The transfer document also carries a student's grades.

Efforts in Los Angeles. On June 26, 1991, a binational conference on literacy and adult education was held in Los Angeles. The purpose of the conference was to help the Los Angeles Unified School District study the problems and educational needs of the students of Mexican origin that it serves. This conference focused on teaching skills, materials, evaluation, staff training, and the problems faced by literacy programs. A series of reports and several proposals for interinstitutional collaboration emerged from the discussions. Mexico sent representatives from the Regional Center of Adult Education and Literacy for Latin America (CREFAL), the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), the Education Investigations Department of the Polytechnical Institute, the Northern Border College of Mexico, the Chihuahua Center for Education Studies, the Iberoamerican University (Mexico City), and the National Pedagogic University ("Conference on Literacy," 1991).

A group formed in 1992—consisting of representatives from the state

departments of adult education in California, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico, plus representatives from the INEA—has also held meetings. The goal of the group, which calls itself Educación Sin Fronteras, is to look at Mexican concepts of education and to try to adapt these to the education of adults of Mexican origin living in the United States. Currently, the program is waiting to be funded.

In August of 1993, the Mexican secretary of education signed an agreement with the Los Angeles Unified School District to provide Mexican teachers the facility to work in bilingual classrooms in Los Angeles. The teachers will return to Mexico after working for 2 years in Los Angeles.

Private Agencies

One Stop Immigration. This is a community-based nonprofit organization that was formed in 1972. In 1975, One Stop Immigration was incorporated and began to work on legalization and immigration issues with major funding from the city of Los Angeles. In 1987, the group applied to the state department of education for permission to offer classes in history and in English as a second language (ESL) in order to prepare people for the federal amnesty program. However, the fact that many of the students were illiterate in Spanish meant that the educational program had to be expanded beyond its original scope.

During April 1990, the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA) provided training for staff members of One Stop Immigration. In August 1990, Mexico shipped seven trailer loads of INEA materials to Los Angeles (153,715 elementary and secondary books for use with adults). Teachers Martha Yolanda Ochoa, Miguel Angel Casao, Humberto Jiménez, and José Malagán came from Mexico to teach the staff members to use the materials. Since 1988, One Stop has served more than 87,000 people.

In August 1992, some 9,000 people attended One Stop schools in 21 service centers located throughout California. After completing the *primaria* or *secundaria* program, people can apply to take a test that will earn them a Mexican primary or secondary education certificate, which is sent from Mexico City. Currently, some 3,000 people are enrolled in the *primaria* program. And there are about 30 smaller agencies in the Los Angeles area that use the Mexican materials (Flores, 1992).

On July 21, 1992, I visited the One Stop Immigration Center in Oakland, California. The center teaches four levels of ESL, literacy in Spanish, and the *primaria* and *secundaria* curriculum. There are about 92 students in the program—five in the Spanish literacy program, 30 in the *primaria* and *secundaria* programs, and the rest in ESL classes. Classes for the *primaria* and the secundaria meet two nights a week for 3 hours each. One evening,

the subjects are Spanish and math; the other, they are natural science and social science. Each evening, students finish one lesson in each of the two subjects. When they finish all the lessons in the books, they take tests provided by the Mexican Ministry of Education.

The teachers in the program are certified by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, but they do not have teaching credentials from the state of California. When I visited in the summer of 1992, the teachers were working without pay because of California's budget problems. They hoped to receive a paycheck on September 15—three months from the date of my visit.

PROFMEX. In 1981, nine U.S. universities in the Southwest (University of Texas, Austin; University of Texas, El Paso; University of New Mexico; New Mexico State University; University of Arizona; Arizona State University; San Diego State University; UCLA; and Stanford University) formed PROFMEX to find mechanisms to enhance communication and collaboration among researchers working on contemporary issues in U.S.-Mexican relations. PROFMEX was joined by ANUIES (Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior), and together the two organizations sponsor research, hold meetings, print a monograph series, print a newsletter, and offer advice on border issues. Since 1992 PROFMEX membership has included more than 70 institutions in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Recently, the Centre for International Studies, based at the University of Toronto, also joined PROFMEX. Though this organization focuses on a broad range of Mexican-U.S. topics, education is a major focus. In 1988, PROFMEX and ANUIES held a joint conference on education that focused on the content of Mexican textbooks. In November 1992, the seventh PROFMEX/ANUIES symposium was held in Cancún, Mexico. Education and Human Resources was one of the six panel topics.

In 1992, PROFMEXIS, a computer network, was established with the support of the Ford Foundation. PROFMEXIS gives network users customized E-mail communication, database access, and a file-transfer capability. The communications center in Mexico is the Centro de Tecnología e Información, with the database and communication facilities provided by the University of Mexico. The permanent home for the database in the United States will be at the Austin campus of the University of Texas. Through this system, scholars will have customized access to the holdings of major research libraries and to a variety of public databases in the social and natural sciences.

Perhaps the most important undertaking of PROFMEX has been the summary of research published in both languages. It is printed by the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California, San

Diego, and by el Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, Baja California. The 1987 edition contained 1,231 research projects, of which 51 were in the field of education.

Implications

The border between the United States and Mexico is never wider than a river, and there are large Spanish-speaking communities on both sides of that river. Because of socioeconomic conditions, Mexicans in the United States, as a group, are not very prosperous. This has been recognized by the government and by private agencies. A truly international effort to improve the conditions of Mexicans living in the United States is now under way.

Pursuing family literacy has been shown to be an effective way of educating this group. The use of Mexican textbooks and the incentive of a Mexican diploma—coupled with mutual attempts to understand education in both countries—are paying off. As education becomes more important to the family, the economic level of the family will rise, and the younger children will stay in school longer. In addition, U.S. educators are learning from their Mexican counterparts how to handle the unique strengths of the Mexican students. The prospects are encouraging.

There is no question that the projects and programs listed above are important. However, they have developed in piecemeal fashion. The information I have presented here must be constantly updated and disseminated to the education community so that awareness of the role of Mexican educational materials and programs in the United States will expand.

Contact Information: Selected Programs

Binational Program

Collaboration and communication (including a Binational Transfer Document, teacher exchanges and shared materials, presentations, and Spanish language classes) between migrant education program administrators in the U.S. states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington with administrators from the Mexican states of Baja California Norte, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacán, Sonora, and Zacatecas, and others.

Contact: Gil Villaseñor, Coordinator, Binational Program,
Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office,
5189 Verdugo Way, Camarilla, CA 93012; telephone 805/383-1924 or 800/451-9697; fax 805/383-6973.

Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES)

The U.S. Lecturer Program is for U.S. scholars to teach at universities in the American Republics. Grants are usually awarded for 3-9 months. Many include research as well as lecturing. Openings are announced annually by CIES.

The U.S. Regional Researcher Program provides 3-6 month grants for senior (post-doctoral) scholars to conduct research in any field in any American Republic.

The Scholar-in-Residence Program provides grants to scholars from the American Republics area to lecture at U.S. universities for one semester or one academic year.

3400 International Drive, N.W., Ste. M-500
Washington, DC 20008-3097; telephone 202/686-4000

Institute of International Education (IIE)

U.S. Student Program offers U.S. students the opportunity for up to one academic year of post-graduate study or research in the American Republics. Applicants must have an undergraduate or equivalent degree before the start of the grant, but cannot have a doctorate.

809 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017; telephone 212/883-8200

Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center

Publisher of information about cross-border organizations in Mexico and the United States, including a directory, *Cross Border Links*, and a periodical, *Border Lines*.

P O Box 4506, Albuquerque, NM 87196;
WWW: http://lib.nmsu.edu/subject/bord/bordline
phone: 505/842-8288
E-mail: resourcectr@igc.apc.org

International Relations Department

Provides access to people in the government, letters of introduction, UNESCO library

Lic. Gustavo Ramirez
Dirección General de Relaciones Internacionales Educación Bilingue
Av. Presidente Masarik No. 526 1er Piso
Col. Polanco
Mexico, D.F. 11560 Mexico

Latin American Scholarship Program of American Universities (LASPAU)

Fulbright/LASPAU Faculty Development Program: Faculty development grants awarded to faculty members of participating American Republics universities for advanced study in the U.S. Grants provide English

language training as necessary and maintenance through completion of master's, Ph.D., or nondegree programs.

25 Mt. Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138; telephone 617/495-5255

One Stop Immigration and Educational Center

Assistance in gaining legal status and citizenship, including literacy, ESL, and citizenship classes.

Contact: Martha Sanchez, 3600 Whittier Blvd.,
Los Angeles, CA 90023; telephone 213/268-8472

PROFMEX - The Consortium for Research on Mexico

Research, conferences, literature on Mexico computer data banks in United States and Mexico

WWW: http://profmexis.sar.net
Contact: Robert Gibson
phone: 310/206-8500 / 825-0870
fax: 310/825-8421 / 206-3555
E-mail: Gibson@others.sscnet.ucla.edu

Program for Mexican Communities Abroad

La Paloma newsletter, list of courses in Mexican Universities
Homero 213-13, Col. Chapultepec Morales
C.P. 11570 Mexico, D.F. Mexico
(To subscribe to *La Paloma*)
Apartado Postal 105-234 Polanco
CP 11581 Mexico, DF Mexico

Teachers in LA

Sr. Pescado was in charge of the consulate in L.A. He organized a program for teachers to work in L.A. My contact is his assistant.

Lic. Eloisa Valdez
SS de Servicos Educativos para el D.F.
Brazil 31 piso 1
Mexico, D.F. 06020 Mexico

University Affiliations and CAMPUS Programs

The Research Program for Foreign Scholars provides 3-6 month grants to scholars from the American Republics area to conduct research at a U.S. educational institution. Minimum master's degree required.

Caribbean and Central American Researcher Programs offer awards for scholars from the Caribbean and Central America to conduct research at U.S. educational institution for 3-6 months. Minimum master's degree required.

Fulbright/IIE Foreign Student Program provides grants to foreign students

to earn master's or Ph.D. degrees at U.S. universities in selected fields. Full and partial grants are offered.

CAMPUS Program provides 29-month grants to Central American undergraduates for study at selected U.S. universities and colleges leading to a bachelor's degree in specified fields. Grants provide English language training as necessary.

United States Information Agency
Academic Exchanges Division
American Republics Branch
301 4th Street, S.W., Room 246
Washington, DC 20547; telephone 202/619-5365

U.S. Department of Education

(They signed an agreement with Mexico concerning education.)
Dr. Steward Tinsman
Director of International and Territorial Affairs
Room 3047
United States Department of Education
Washington, DC 20208-5570

U.S.-Mexico Educational Interchange Project

A series of invitational *Educational Leadership Seminars* has been developed to enable key leaders to meet periodically to address specific issues of relevance in North American education exchange. The seminars are designed to share information about the higher education systems in Mexico, the United States, and Canada; increase the mobility of students, professionals, and scholars interested in North American education exchange; and create a stronger sense of a North American identity as policymakers address issues affecting higher education in both countries.

Contact: Margo Schultz, Senior Project Assistance
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E-mail: ortega@profmexis.sar.net

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